

Background document

The Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism in the MED Area will serve as a tool to transfer the knowledge accumulated during the project. The Charter is a perfect tool to involve stakeholders across the Mediterranean region in the development of cycling tourism and EuroVelo 8 – Mediterranean Route.

Funded by the Interreg Mediterranean Programme, the [MEDCYCLETLOUR project](#) has a budget of over €2.5 million. It is a three-year project that started in February 2017 and will end in August 2020. It takes place along the long-distance [EuroVelo 8 – Mediterranean Route](#), which connects many destinations that are popular tourist attractions in their own right: Cádiz, Barcelona, Nice, Venice, the Croatian Dalmatian Coast, Cyprus, etc.

The main objective of the MEDCYCLETLOUR project is to use the EuroVelo 8 route as a tool to influence regional and national policies in favor of sustainable and responsible tourism, providing transnational solutions in coastal areas across the Mediterranean. The Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism in the MED Area, which consists in a clear one-page document summarizing the benefits of, the objectives of and the actions for the development of cycling tourism in the MED area, will be a very useful document to achieve this.

Investing in sustainable and responsible tourism is especially important now that Europe is suffering the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis has conversely given a significant boost to cycling and cycle tourism, with cycling being recognised as a resilient and healthy mode of transport. The first available data from several European countries shows that citizens are massively switching to cycling. It is crucial to build on this momentum to further develop both cycling and cycle tourism in the Mediterranean. Now is the time to invest in good cycling infrastructure and look at successful measures being put in place all around Europe, to ensure people will keep choosing two-wheels holidays in the months and years to come.

Hereafter the Charter's contents are detailed with additional background information.

Benefits of cycling tourism for the MED area

- Cycling is a truly **environmentally sustainable** means of both transport and tourism. Cycling contributes to the reduction of air and noise pollution¹, greenhouse gas emission² and congestion. It helps to fight climate change and provides a healthier environment for the local populations and the visitors. Cycling infrastructure needs less space than infrastructure for cars. This means “less sealed soils, less soil pollution and less water pollution”³, especially in remote areas and natural parks. Moreover, it can replace motorised trips both for locals in their everyday journeys and for tourists visiting several sites along the Mediterranean. Cycle

¹ According to ECF's [Economic Benefits of Cycling](#), the value of reduced air pollution through cycling is 435 million euros, and air pollution is the single largest environmental health risk in Europe, causing around 400 000 premature deaths per year. Concerning noise pollution, the value of reducing it through cycling is 300 million euros. Noise pollution from road traffic is the cause of around 8 900 premature deaths and almost 800 000 additional cases of hypertension per year in Europe.

² According to ECF's [Economic Benefits of Cycling](#), Cycling saves emissions equaling more than 16 million tons of CO2 equivalents per year in the EU.

³ From ECF's [Economic Benefits of Cycling](#).

tourists tend to use public transport more than the plane to reach their holiday destination, which also contributes to the environmental sustainability of cycling tourism. The Mediterranean region needs to position itself as a main destination for environment and nature lovers on the international tourism market, and cycling (tourism) is a great tool for this.

- Cycling tourism can contribute to the **economic sustainability** of destinations.
Cycling tourism is a growing part of the tourism market and there is potential for its share in the Mediterranean region to increase. Destinations can benefit economically from the development of cycling tourism. This type of tourism brings people away from the main touristic areas and into villages and rural areas, developing the local economy. This is especially important in the Mediterranean region, where overtourism threatens major touristic cities and endangers natural and cultural heritage sites, and where cruise journeys always bring tourists to the same places. The Mediterranean region's rural areas have a lot of potential that cycling tourism allows to develop much better than other forms of tourism. Moreover, studies have shown that cycle tourists spend more in average than other tourist categories as they need more food and drinks and carry less with them. In France, for example, cycle tourists spend almost 20% more than the average for all tourists⁴. They tend to consume local products from small and medium enterprises, which are typical in the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, the Mediterranean region's climate allows to fight against seasonality as the cycling season can be very long, which ensures economic sustainability as tourism incomes are not limited to a few months in the year.
- Local communities and wider society benefit from the development of dedicated cycling infrastructure, contributing to **social sustainability** too.
Many Mediterranean coastal cities are very busy and overcrowded, partly because of the numbers of tourists, which makes them less liveable for the local population. In beach resorts, the roads are often congested in the summer because of the high numbers of rental cars. Conversely, some areas along the coast are very remote and not easily accessible by public transport. Investments in cycling infrastructure, both in and out of urban areas, can help to connect bigger cities and rural areas with an alternative to highways. This benefits the local population by providing a possibility to switch to the bicycle for daily journeys as well, which improves the well-being and health of local population (studies from London, Montreal, the US and Colombia show that cyclist commuters are the most or among the most satisfied with their trips to work, and cycling prevents 18,110 premature deaths per year in the EU-28). Moreover, cycling tourism can help tackle unemployment: the sector is linked to ca. 525 000 jobs in the EU⁵ and helps to fight the seasonality of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean area.

Objectives for developing cycling tourism in the MED area

- **Build and sign** attractive, safe, direct and comfortable European, national, regional and local cycle routes.
Cycling is generally perceived not to be safe enough in the Mediterranean region, and that is the main obstacle that keeps people from cycling there. To tackle this challenge, destinations need to invest in safe cycling infrastructure, awareness-raising and regulatory measures to

⁴ From ECF's [Economic Benefits of Cycling](#).

⁵ From ECF's [Economic Benefits of Cycling](#).

improve the objective and perceived safety of cycling in the region. In order to encourage cycling tourism, Mediterranean countries should also invest in the development of cycle route networks at the local, regional and national levels. Signed and safe cycle routes attract both regular cycle tourists and aspiring cyclists, families and more vulnerable portions of the population. EuroVelo 8 – Mediterranean Route will serve as a backbone to connect the local, regional and national cycle networks.

- **Develop more dedicated services** to cater for the increasing numbers of cycling tourists coming to the MED area.
The amount of cycling friendly services available in the Mediterranean region is relatively small. The accommodation, restaurants and public transport services should adapt to the needs of cycle tourists. Better bike repair shops and rental services should be established in proximity to the cycling routes. Many countries have already implemented cycle friendly labels for accommodations, restaurants and other services. For instance, “[Accueil Vélo](#)” in France, “[Bienvenue Vélo](#)” in Belgium, “[Bett+Bike](#)” in Germany, “[Cyclists Welcome](#)” in the UK, etc. Some of the criteria that these services need to meet are: to be located close to a cycle route (generally less than 5km); to provide adapted equipment for cyclists such as a secured bicycle shelter and a repair kit; to offer a warm welcome to cyclists and useful information on the local cycle routes; and to propose services adapted to cyclists (free water, possibility to stay only one night, luggage transfer, washing and drying of linen, bicycle rental, etc.)
- **Improve and promote the image of cycling and cycling tourism and the positioning of the Mediterranean region as a cycling tourism destination.**
The image of cycling and cycling tourism and the positioning of the Mediterranean region as a cycling tourism destination needs to be improved by branding and promotion through all tourism bodies in the Mediterranean region.
- **All relevant stakeholders should collaborate to realise the activities above, establish or support National EuroVelo Coordination Centres.**
Stakeholders at all levels (from local to national) and in all sectors (public, private, NGO) should collaborate to realise the activities above. The establishment of National EuroVelo Coordination Centres in all countries is essential for the effective implementation of the activities described above.
- **Adequate financial resources need to be allocated** in order to realise the objectives listed above. This will require a blend of EU funds from the financial perspective (2021-2027), national/regional/local public resources and private investments.

Actions to develop and promote cycling tourism in the MED area

- **Exchange know-how, expertise, best practices and experiences** to implement the objectives and actions described in this charter.
Collaboration between countries across the region and the sharing of experiences and good practices is essential to implement concrete changes. These connections inspire municipalities and regions with examples of what worked well in other parts of the MED area and empower them.
- **Raise awareness and advocate for financial resources** for developing cycling tourism at all levels of government.

The benefits of cycling tourism for the Mediterranean (see above) need to be communicated and understood at all levels of government in order to ensure the availability of financial resources for its development. An advocacy work is thus paramount in the region, where the advantages of sustainable tourism are not always fully taken into account.

- **Implement those measures (described above) that are our responsibility.**
This Charter is more than a call for sustainable cycle tourism in general as it contains precise objectives that can be realised concretely over a short period of time: build and sign cycle routes, develop cycling friendly services, promote cycling tourism in the Mediterranean area and establish National EuroVelo Coordination Centres in countries where they are still missing.
- **Continue to collaborate on the international level across the MED area to develop sustainable and responsible cycling tourism.**
Collaboration at the transnational level is essential to develop a high-quality consistent long-distance cycle route in the Mediterranean region. It is important to offer cycle tourists the same level of quality for cycle routes, signing and services independently of the country they are in, and to ensure the continuity of the route at border points.



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DÉPARTEMENT
DES ALPES-MARITIMES



EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION



EuroVelo
the European cycle route network



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